



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 24th February 2013 - The Second Sunday in Lent

1 **Relax & Remember**

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 **Read**

Gospel for Sunday 24th February 2013 - The Transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:28-36)

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah," – He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him." And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

3 **Reflect**

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

The gospel reading for the Second Sunday of Lent is always the account of the Transfiguration, preparing the chosen three disciples and ourselves for the coming Passion of Christ. It is a scene of Christ's heavenly glory, his clothes bright as lightning, his glory extending even to the appearance of Moses and Elijah: these two Old Testament personalities are here privileged to speak to Jesus because they each had a vision of God on the holy mountain, called both Sinai and Horeb (in the Old Testament these are two names for the same mountain). The Voice from heaven at the baptism had been addressed to Jesus himself (in Mark and Luke); this time the Voice is a public declaration of Jesus' Sonship, and presents him now as the Chosen Teacher for all people. Luke foreshadows the Passion when he mentions Jerusalem – the place where Jesus is to suffer and die on the cross. The fact that the disciples are praying, and are the same three disciples as are present at the Agony in the Garden, makes a strong link with the Passion of Jesus. This gospel also highlights the importance of prayer in Luke's gospel, for Luke mentions Jesus' prayer and the significance of prayer on several occasions and in several parables (e.g. in the Unjust Judge, the Friend at Midnight, and the Pharisee & the Tax-Collector).

What do you find the best form of prayer? What commitment to prayer can you make this Lent? Jesus was transfigured on the 'Holy' Mountain. What makes a place 'holy'?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB



4 **Respond & Request**

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, and joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 24th February 2013



First Reading: *The Covenant with Abraham*

Genesis 15:5-12. 17-18

Taking Abram outside the Lord said, "Look up to heaven and count the stars if you can. Such will be your descendants," he told him. Abram put his faith in the Lord, who counted this as making him justified. "I am the Lord," he said to him, "who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to make you heir to this land." "My Lord, the Lord," Abram replied, "how am I to know that I shall inherit it?" He said to him, "Get me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon." He brought him all these, cut them in half and put half on one side and half facing it on the other; but the birds he did not cut in half. Birds of prey came down on the carcasses but Abram drove them off. Now as the sun was setting Abram fell into a deep sleep, and terror seized him. When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, there appeared a smoking furnace and a firebrand that went between the halves. That day the Lord made a Covenant with Abram in these terms: "To your descendants I give this land, from the wadi of Egypt to the Great River."

There are different stories of exactly how God's pact with Abraham (or Abram) was made. There is no doubt that it was a promise of lasting protection for Abraham and his descendants. This version takes the form of an ancient sacral covenant, of a kind known from other ancient Near Eastern sources. The offerings are cut in half, and the parties making the pact pass between the halves, as a symbol that they will observe the pact faithfully until the two halves come together again. Such covenants were frequent between equals, or between overlord and vassal, but no such covenant is known between a deity and a human being. It perhaps marks the inequality between God and Abraham that only the wondrous symbols of God (the furnace and firebrand) here pass between the halves of the offering: Abraham cannot impose conditions on God! Nor can Abraham do anything to earn or justify the promise God makes: he can only trust in God, for he himself remains a nomad without a settled territory to call his own. Only his descendants will inherit the land and become as the stars of heaven. The awesome mystery of the scene is increased by the deep sleep (the same sleep as fell on Adam for the creation of Eve) and by Abram's terror.

What covenant does God make with us Christians? What must we do to keep our part of the Covenant?

Second Reading: *Citizenship of Heaven*

Philippians 3:17 - 4:1

My brothers, be united in following my rule of life. Take as your models everybody who is already doing this and study them as you used to study us. I have told you often, and I repeat it today with tears, there are many who are behaving as the enemies of the cross of Christ. They are destined to be lost. They make foods into their god and they are proudest of something they ought to think shameful; the things they think important are earthly things. For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which he can subdue the whole universe. So then, my brothers and dear friends, do not give way but remain faithful in the Lord. I miss you very much, dear friends; you are my joy and my crown.

Last Sunday's second reading (from Paul's letter to the Romans) built on the first reading (from Deuteronomy); the Israelite profession of faith in God becomes the Christian's profession of faith in Christ as Risen Lord. So this Sunday Abram's promised ownership of the land is gazumped by the promise of citizenship in heaven to the followers of Christ. In this world we are aliens rather than citizens: neither our fundamental values nor our final aim are those of this world. We cannot rest in contentment except in the expectation of the Risen Lord coming in triumph to assume lordship of all things. This, rather than food or any material goods, must be the basis of our whole system of values. To modern conventions Paul's repeated encouragement to follow his rule of life or to imitate him may seem boastful and complacent. But Paul asks us to imitate him not for his own glory, but because he sees himself as the servant of Christ, suffering for Christ, just as Jesus suffered as the Servant of the Lord. Paul's sufferings are the badge of apostleship. In other passages, Paul shows that he is as aware as any of us of his own failings and of his inability to live up to his ideals.

Who are "models" for us? How can we follow Christ more closely?

“We cannot rest in contentment except in the expectation of the Risen Lord.”

The Wednesday Word: Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God
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